

# **A Commitment to Helping America's Youth**

## **Helping America's Youth Regional Conference**

University of Denver  
Denver, Colorado  
August 3-4, 2006

**HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH**





## A COMMITMENT TO HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH

### Calling Our Nation to Action: Care, Connect, Commit

**Helping Youth Reach Their Full Potential.** In his 2005 State of the Union Address, President Bush announced a broad effort to engage all Americans in helping young people become healthy adults. He asked Mrs. Laura Bush to lead this important effort, which became known as the *Helping America's Youth* initiative. *Helping America's Youth* is a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the challenges facing our youth, particularly at-risk boys, and to motivate caring adults to connect with youth in three key areas: family, school, and community.

### Caring Adults Are The Key

- **Young People Need to be Surrounded by Caring Adults.** President and Mrs. Bush believe parents and family are the first and most important influence in every child's life, providing a foundation of love and support. By becoming actively involved in the lives of young people in their community, grandparents, teachers, mentors, clergy members, neighbors, coaches, and other community members can support parents and help youth become community assets, making better choices that lead to healthier, more successful lives. Research has shown that supportive relationships are crucial to an adolescent's well-being. Boys, in particular, need caring adults in their lives because they are at greater risk than girls for illiteracy, dropping out of school, substance-abuse problems, violence, juvenile arrest, developing learning disabilities, and early death caused by violent behavior. As boys grow older, risky behaviors, such as alcohol and drug abuse, become more prevalent and gang involvement increases.
- You can be a caring adult in the life of a child by following the 3 C's:  
*Care:* take an interest, show concern, reach out to youth  
*Connect:* establish a rapport, provide guidance and support  
*Commit:* pledge yourself, invest yourself over time

**Partnerships that Connect Families, Schools and Communities.** The President and Mrs. Bush believe that caring adults are most effective when they are part of a community effort. Community partnerships bring together individuals such as teachers, mentors, parents, clergy members, police officers, social service providers and others that can have a positive impact on a child's life. The challenges facing young people are best addressed by connecting people throughout the community and coordinating resources to support youth.

### A Guide to Making Community Connections

The *Community Guide to Helping America's Youth* helps caring adults connect with the youth in their families, schools and communities. It encourages Americans to make an even bigger difference by forming partnerships to implement programs that have been proven to help youth. This web-based guide is available at [www.helpingamericasyouth.gov](http://www.helpingamericasyouth.gov).



- The *Community Guide* includes examples of how individuals can “Get Connected” with youth in families, schools and communities.
- The *Community Guide* includes a **Community Assessment Guide** that offers communities a step-by-step approach for learning more about their community, including where youth-related problems occur, which youth and families are most affected by those problems, and what local resources and assets the community can use to address those problems.
- The *Community Guide* includes a **Community Resource Inventory** with which localities can use to identify and track partners and programs that are already at work in their community.
- The *Community Guide* includes a **Program Tool** that provides information about promising and proven effective interventions to prevent adolescent risky behaviors and promote positive youth development.

**The *Community Guide to Helping America's Youth* Reflects the Most Up-to-Date Research on Youth Development and Effective Programs.** A coalition of experts from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, Education, Agriculture, Labor, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development; the Office of National Drug Control Policy; and the Corporation for National and Community Service developed the guide.

### Regional Conferences To Bring Communities Together

**Helping America's Youth Regional Conferences Throughout the Country.** On October 27, 2005, Mrs. Bush convened The White House Conference on Helping America's Youth at Howard University in Washington, DC. More than 500 parents, civic leaders, faith-based and community service providers, foundations, educators, researchers, and experts in child development gathered for this National conference to discuss the challenges facing America's youth and to share best practices shown to be successful in overcoming those challenges.

In the year ahead, Mrs. Bush will build on the success of the October 2005 White House Conference on Helping America's Youth by working with state and local partners to host regional conferences throughout the United States. The goal of these regional conferences is to increase public awareness and encourage adults to connect with youth in their communities. *The second regional conference will take place August 3-4 in Denver, Colorado.*

### Background: America's Youth Are At Risk

**Young Americans In Many Communities Are At Risk.** While research indicates that an increasing number of American children are on the path to success, too many young people still face persistent challenges that hold them back from reaching their full potential. Research has shown that youth are less likely to engage in risky behaviors when they are connected to parents, family, school, community, and places of worship. Risky behaviors, including illegal drug and tobacco use, violence, and early sexual activity, are among the top causes of disease and early death among youth. Statistics show:

- Boys often begin to fall behind girls in reading and writing achievement in elementary school, and boys often show signs of behavioral problems early in life. Poor academic achievement is related to higher rates of school dropout and juvenile delinquency.



- Statistics show boys are at greater risk than girls for developing learning disabilities, illiteracy, dropping out of school, substance-abuse problems, violence, juvenile arrest, and early death caused by violent behavior. As boys grow older, risky behaviors, such as alcohol and drug abuse, become more prevalent and gang involvement increases.
- Students who have difficulty learning to read will have a greater chance of school failure and behavior problems such as aggression.
- In 2000, there were an estimated 19 million new cases of (sexually transmitted diseases (STD) among Americans. Approximately half of all new STD infections occur in teens and young adults (ages 15-24) each year.
- Injury and violence are the leading cause of death among youth aged 5-19; motor vehicle crashes account for approximately 40% of all deaths; and almost one-quarter of young drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking alcohol.

Sources for the above statistics can be found on *Facts About America's Youth* at  
[www.helpingamericasyouth.gov](http://www.helpingamericasyouth.gov)